

TESTIMONY OF SUSAN SALTERS- APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
Department of Rehabilitation Services Budget
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, FEBRUARY 22, 2013

Good evening, esteemed Legislators and members of the Appropriations committee. My name is Susan Salters, a staff member at Independence Unlimited, a Center for Independent Living located in Harford. I am submitting this testimony to you today in response to the Governor's proposed state budget this year that eliminates all Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS/BRS) funds for the Centers for Independent Living for the next 2 years. I request that you restore full funding for Centers for Independent Living (CIL's) who provide essential core services including advocacy, peer counseling, skills training and information and referral services to some of our most vulnerable citizens. Over the past several years funding for the 5 CIL's has diminished while the need for services has grown. As our population ages and people with disabilities move out of skilled nursing facilities having an agency in the local area that can answer questions and help guide people through the complexities of daily living may just mean the difference between keeping people in the community or institutionalization in a nursing facility.

CIL's serve people of:

All Ages

All Types of Disabilities

All Areas of the State

CIL's provide PWD's with:

Core Services: Advocacy, Skills Training, Information & Referrals,
and Peer Support

A Single Point of Entry into disability services

Transition help from nursing homes to a home of their own

Pre-vocational skills training

Housing searches

Access to transportation and education

CIL's Services Outcomes:

Education

Goal Achievement

Self Sufficiency

Reduced reliance on state or Federal entitlement programs

The CONSEQUENCES:

If funding for the Centers for Independent Living is not restored or not restored to its previous level, some CIL's will be forced to close their doors, people with disabilities employed by CIL's will lose their jobs, access to independent living services will be derailed, cost saving programs like Money Follows the Person will be negatively affected and a \$4.4 million dollar saving in nursing home costs will be lost. The Centers for Independent Living in partnership with the Department of Rehabilitation Services are a source of employment assistance for people with disabilities. Options Counseling is provided through ADRC's, while ADA and Aging In Place technical assistance is provided through Project Independence. Supporting and educating youth with disabilities is our way of assuring the future will be brighter for those coming along. State backing of the Centers for Independent Living supports the independent living philosophy so people with disabilities can enjoy the same civil rights as others and live in the community. Invest in people for a better tomorrow. Thank you for your time and consideration.